

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL</b>	
	<b>Chapter 11: Independent Living</b>	<b>Effective Date:</b> July 1, 2006
	<b>Section 1: Independent Living Services</b>	<b>Version:</b> 1

<b>POLICY</b>	<b>OLD POLICIES 404.42, 404.43</b>
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- The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make available Chafee Independent Living (IL) services to eligible Children in Need of Services (CHINS) and Probation youth aged 16 to 21 and eligible former foster youth aged 18 to 21.
- DCS will assure that all CHINS and Probation youth aged 16 to 21 placed in residential facilities, group homes, private agency foster homes, or other similar placements are provided IL services by the placement agency.
- DCS will assure that IL Youth Conferences and Computer Camps are conducted annually.

#### Code References

[42 USC 677: Chafee Foster Care Independence Program](#)

<b>PROCEDURE</b>
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The Family Case Manager (FCM)/Probation Officer will:

1. Complete and submit a referral for Chafee IL services for CHINS youth/Probation wards aged 16 to 21 placed in county foster care homes, relative homes, or non-licensed court approved placements, or in his/her own home following reunification. (All referrals for Probation wards must include a Probation case plan indicating the need for IL services.)
2. Assure that all referred youth in out-of-home placement aged 16-21 complete the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) at [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org) within 30 days of referral and every 6 months during service provision and a copy of each ACLSA is obtained for the youth's case file.
3. Assure that mentors are located and screened for all youth aged 16-21 (as youth are willing to participate) who are receiving Chafee IL services.
4. Assure that an IL plan is developed for all referred youth based on results of the ACLSA with youth participation and input from the FCM/Probation Officer and others involved in the youth's case and updated following each assessment. See tool [11.A: Independent Living Plan](#).
5. Assure that the youth's ACLSA and progress reports are obtained on all CHINS and Probation youth aged 16 to 21 receiving IL Services through residential facilities, group homes, private agency foster homes, and Chafee IL service providers.
6. Refer all CHINS and Probation youth in foster care for transition services regardless of the type of placement at age 17 years and 6 months or older whose case will be dismissed after the age of 18. See separate policy, [11.6: Transition Planning and Services](#).
7. Assure that Probation Wards (other than IV-E eligible youth) in out-of-home care are entered into the Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS) as a JD/JS Place and Pay service case and a case plan is entered in the youth's case identifying the need for IL services.

8. Assure that all former eligible youth requesting voluntary IL services have eligibility determined, their application signed and forwarded to the Chafee IL service provider in a timely manner. See separate policy, [11.7: Voluntary Services](#)

The Chafee IL service provider, residential facility, group home, private foster care agency, or other placement agency will:

1. Assure that all eligible CHINS and Probation youth referred for services complete the ACLSA within 30 days of referral and every 6 months during service provision and provide a copy of each assessment to the referring worker.
2. Develop an IL plan with the youth including input from the referring worker and others involved in the youth's case based on the strengths and needs as determined by the ACLSA and update the plan following each assessment.
3. Participate in case conferences held with the youth, the youth's FCM or Probation Officer, and others in the youth's life as decisions are made regarding the youth's future.
4. Provide progress reports to the referring worker as determined by the agency's contract.

The Chafee IL service provider will:

1. Locate and screen voluntary mentors for all youth being provided Chafee services.
2. Provide the means for youth to complete the Chafee assessment at <http://www.chafee.org> at the completion of 6 months of service and at the closure of services to the youth. Provide the completed document to the youth's FCM, Probation Officer or IL Field Specialist as appropriate. See separate policy, [11.15: IL Field Specialist](#).
3. Provide Transition Services, which includes relationship building and assistance in obtaining housing and employment to all youth referred. See separate policy, [11.6: Transition Planning and Services](#).

## **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

### **Assessment Required**

All youth referred for services must complete the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) at [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org). The independent living assessment must include a comprehensive, written assessment of the youth's strengths as well as areas of improvement. The ACLSA is the only assessment tool approved for use for youth in Indiana. Resource material may be downloaded from [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org) to meet all identified needs of youth being assessed.

### **Involving Youth In The Planning Process**

Youth need to be involved in the planning process for their future including participation in case conferences and court hearings. When youth have a voice in their future, they are much more willing to work with adults. Serious planning for the transition to independence should begin when the youth turns 16 because the youth's future depends much on how well he/she is engaged in the school and the community in which the youth lives. Volunteer opportunities help youth connect and become a part of community. Employment helps the youth recognize his/her abilities and strengths as he/she develops a work ethic and saves for the future.

Even though many youth can hardly wait to "get out of the system", most don't know what to expect when they are totally on their own. Foster youth look toward their freedom with excitement and fear. Sometimes youth will sabotage the efforts of those who are trying to help them because of this uncertainty.

### **Case Conferences and Youth Participation**

Youth receiving IL services are required to participate directly in designing their program activities, must accept personal responsibility for achieving independence, and must have opportunities to learn from experiences/failures. A case conference should be scheduled with the youth, the Chafee IL service provider or placement facility, foster parent or relative caregiver, and others involved in the youth's case following receipt of the ACLSA to assist the youth in developing an IL plan based on identified needs and strengths.

IL services should be provided according to the developmental needs and differing stages of independence of the youth. Services should not be seen as a single event but rather as a series of activities designed over time to support the youth in attaining a level of self sufficiency that allows for a productive adult life. Services should address all of the preparatory requirements for independent adulthood and recognize the evolving and changing developmental needs of the adolescent. Services must allow the youth to develop skills based on experiential learning.

### **IL Services**

IL services to be provided through Chafee funds are identified in the [Chafee Independent Living Service Standards](#).

### **Mentors....Committed Caring Adults**

All children need committed caring adults in their lives at any age. As youth are being prepared to age out of foster care, mentors are vital to assist the youth as plans are made for the future and when there are questions or validation is needed in some area of life. Chafee IL service providers will provide mentoring services that appropriately match youth by age 17 with screened and trained adults through an existing mentoring program for one-to-one relationships or ensure that the youth can identify a volunteer mentor of their own choosing and monitor that the relationship exists and the mentor is committed to maintaining a mentoring relationship with the youth. Mentoring may include:

- One-on-one guidance, support and encouragement within a structured, formal program.
- Listening, coaching, educating, sponsoring, encouraging, counseling, and role modeling.
- Guiding youth in the use of free or leisure time by sharing their own interests and encouraging the young person to do the same.
- Assist the youth regarding faith-based activities, music, art, cultural support, use of the public library and participation in civic service and community activities.

### **Services to be Provided by Residential Facilities and Group Homes**

IL services are vital for all youth ages 16-21; however, due to the restrictiveness of the placement, services requiring youth to be off grounds may not be feasible. The ACLSA will identify the youth's strengths and needs. Youth are to be provided with services that match the youth's identified needs in these facilities in order to prepare the youth for life without such restrictiveness. Resource materials to address the youth's identified needs are available at no cost to the facility at [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org).

<b>FORMS AND TOOLS</b>
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- [Probation Case Plan](#)
- [Service Referral Form](#)
- [Independent Living Plan Tool](#)

## RELATED INFORMATION

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Frequently Asked Questions I, II, and III on the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Education and Training Voucher Program are available at <http://www.natl-fostercare.org> or <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ChafeeFAQ.htm>. These documents are very helpful in understanding the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

### **IL Youth Conferences**

Statewide IL Youth Conferences are typically held two or three times each year. Each youth conference is held at State post-secondary educational facilities and allows space for 200 participants, which are normally 60% youth and 40% adult chaperones. Foster youth and former foster youth aged 16 to 21 are invited to attend at no cost to the participants. The conferences are youth-focused and provide opportunities for youth to expand their knowledge, participate in learning activities, and to become more familiar with Chafee services available to foster youth and former foster youth. Notice of the IL Youth Conference is made available through the monthly [Chafee IL News Bulletin](#) which is provided to all ICWIS users, Chafee IL service providers, and through the IARCCA Monday Morning Update. The Social Science Research Center at Ball State University is contracted to provide the IL Youth Conferences. The registration form for IL Youth Conferences will be made available through the Chafee IL News Bulletin.

### **IL Computer Camps**

Statewide IL Computer Camps are typically held two to three times each year. Eligible foster youth and former foster youth aged 17 to 21 may apply for participation in the computer camps. Each camp hosts 20 youth and provides training on setting up the computer and printer from the box, operating the computer, and the use of all software installed on the computer. Each youth completing the computer camp is awarded the computer and printer for their future use. Notice of the IL Computer Camps is made available through the monthly Chafee IL News Bulletin which is provided to all ICWIS users, Chafee IL service providers, and through the IARCCA Monday Morning Update. The Social Science Research Center at Ball State University is contracted to provide the IL Computer Camps. The IL Computer Camp Application Form will be made available through the Chafee IL News Bulletin.

### **Voluntary IL Services**

All youth aging out of foster care at 18 or older are eligible for Voluntary IL Services, including Room and Board assistance, as well as the Education and Training Voucher Program. See separate policies, [11.2: Eligibility for Independent Living Services](#), [11.7: Voluntary Chafee Independent Living Services](#), [11.8: Room and Board Services](#) and [11.10: Education and Training Voucher Program](#).

### **Chafee IL News Bulletin**

This document is produced monthly and is made available to all ICWIS users and Chafee IL service providers. This is an excellent tool to keep apprised of IL activities and other information necessary for those serving foster youth.

### **Credit Reports**

All youth in foster care who are 17 and older should be assisted in requesting the free credit report to ensure that the youth's credit record will allow them to obtain housing and utilities when the case is dismissed. Because of identity theft and the practice of some parents using the

youth's social security number to obtain credit, it is vital that all youth who will be aging out of foster care check out their credit rating. If there is negative information on the report, it will be extremely important to work with the youth and the credit reporting company to get the youth's record cleared prior to the case being dismissed and housing pursued. The Federal Trade Commission website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/freereports.htm> explains how to access free credit reports. This website also provides questions and answers related to credit reports.